



the Quail

Mount Diablo Audubon Society

P.O. Box 53, Walnut Creek, CA 94597-0053

www.diabloaudubon.com/index/php

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The Salton Sea • Claudia Eyzaguirre

At our December 3 meeting, Claudia Eyzaguirre will speak on her work to restore the Salton Sea for maximum feasible attainment of historical wildlife levels. She will tell the story of the Salton Sea, its history and its biological value, as well as the current and future efforts to restore it.



The Salton Sea is California's largest lake and a key stopover for literally millions of birds each year, including the threatened Snowy Plover and Yuma Clapper Rail. The Salton Sea straddles Imperial and Riverside Counties and, though little known outside the birding world, the Salton Sea is a national treasure.

But the fate of this desert jewel hangs in the balance, as the volume of water that sustains this 360 square-mile lake will decrease by more than 30 per cent within the next 20 years. As a result of

water transfers to urban San Diego, the lake is rapidly shrinking and the amount of dust and salt that blows through the Imperial and Coachella Valleys is increasing. Fortunately, the state and federal governments are required to restore the Salton Sea. The shape and design of this restoration is highly variable. Will the Sea become a sustained bird refuge or, will the efforts collapse under the pressure of mismanagement and urban development?

Claudia Eyzaguirre is an environmental advocate. Until recently, she was the Chapter Coordinator for Audubon California. She is currently working for the Vote Solar Initiative with the goal of bringing solar energy into mainstream use, nationwide.

Birding Information

Paul Hardy, Founder and Executive Director of the Feather River Land Trust will discuss efforts of the FRLT and the Plumas Audubon Society to conserve and restore bird habitat in Sierra Valley and the rest of the Feather River Watershed. With a B.S. and M.S. in Wildlife and Fisheries Biology, Paul spent six years as a wildlife biologist with the U.S.D.A. Forest Service in Plumas National Forest and three years as Contract Field Representative for the Nature Conservancy on their



Brian Murphy photo

The Bizarre Behavior of the Cooperatively Breeding Acorn Woodpecker • Walter Koenig

Acorn Woodpeckers are common residents of oak woodlands in western North America. They can be found as far north as Oregon and as far south as northern Columbia. Walter Koenig, adjunct professor and research zoologist at Hastings Reservation in Carmel Valley and the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology at the University of

Continued on Page 6



Northern Sierra Nevada Project. He is Consulting Conservation Biologist for Hardy Biological Consulting. He was born and raised in Portola Valley, on the edge of Sierra Valley. Paul will be joined by Darrel Jury, President of Plumas Audubon, and Bob Battagin, expert birder and board member of FRLT. Together, they will highlight the birdlife of Sierra Valley and their efforts to provide improved birding access and education on the FRLT's Maddalena Property in Sierra Valley.

Meeting Schedule

The next general meeting of Mount Diablo Audubon Society will be **Thursday, December 6**, in the Camellia Room of The Gardens at Heather Farm, Walnut Creek.

7:00 PM Birding Information

7:25 PM Announcements

7:40 PM Refreshments,* door prize

8:05 PM Speaker:

Claudia Eyzaguirre

* Please remember to bring a cup.

**January 3: Walter Koenig
Acorn Woodpeckers**

**February 7: Mike Perlmutter
Important Bird Areas**

DEDICATED TO HABITAT CONSERVATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

President's Corner

Last month I devoted my space pretty much to the Audubon California Chapter Volunteer Award that our member Bob Wisecarver received at the Audubon California annual convention at Asilomar. Since that presentation Bob has received more very nice commendations. One from Diablo Valley Fly Fishermen (See story, page 7) and another from the Mountain View Sanitary District for all the work he has done there. All of these are richly deserved.

I also would like to give a plug for our annual Christmas Bird counts that are coming up. They are a lot of fun and one of the highlights of the Audubon year. For some reason I became somewhat obsessed with Christmas Bird counts. In the three-week count period, December 14–January 5, I will do 10 counts. At one point five counts in 6 days. Two of our members, Kent Fickett and Bill Chilson, and I will drive up early 12/14 to join Tim Manolis, the compiler, to do the Marysville count. Tim recently published “The Butterflies and Damsel-flies of California.” Our section includes the eastern edge of the circle on the Yuba River about 12 miles east of Marysville. Last year we started just before daylight walking along the river and watched scores of large birds flying west downstream. In the dim light we thought they were Turkey Vultures, but when it became light we saw they were all BALD EAGLES. We surmise they have a roost at Bullards Bar Reservoir and before dawn fly to the Sacramento River to look for spawning salmon. At the count-down dinner later that evening we reported 46 Bald Eagles. This is why I do a lot of Christmas counts every year; you never know what kind of avian experience will take place. I could tell 100 stories of Christmas count adventures that to me were all special and memorable. I hope you can join us for one our two counts.

Lastly, our MDAS board member Paul Schorr has put together a very impressive plan to get into the classrooms of local schools with a curriculum of birds, field trips, and wildlife education. We will let you know about that this spring. Paul was an educator all his life and brings a lot to the table to help make this happen. There has been a lot in the media lately about “No child left inside” etc. We want to help make this happen.

Jimm Edgar

Speaking of Conservation

Confessions of a White-bellied HAZWOPER

By Nancy Wenninger

The urgent call came by e-mail late Thursday afternoon: Several East Bay Regional Parks had been affected by the oil spill. EBRPD staff was working with the Department of Fish and Game's Oil Spill Prevention and Response Department and the Coast Guard, and volunteers were needed to clean affected waterfowl.

Having cleaned oiled waterfowl 20+ years ago as a Lindsay Wildlife volunteer, I had some experience with this task, which is exhausting for both the human and the bird and does not necessarily have a positive outcome. However, feeling the need to do something, I signed up for the mandatory training at 7:30 AM the next morning, after which time I expected to be cleaning birds. I was not prepared for what followed.

The class turned out to be a condensed version of a 40-hour Hazardous Waste Operations and Emergency Response (HAZWOPER) training. I mostly learned about how many toxic chemicals are contained in bunker oil, and why it was really important that I wear a white plasticized-paper jumpsuit, rubber boots, two layers of protective gloves and eye protection to prevent bodily contact. It was also then that I learned that I would not be cleaning birds, I would be catching them—or more precisely, trying to catch them.

Catching an oiled bird is really, really difficult. First, although the bird may be thoroughly exhausted from constant preening, hypothermia and starvation, it will use its last resources of energy to flee from perceived danger—that is, the human clad in the approved HAZWOPER outfit carrying a large net. Secondly, a beach offers little cover for the stealthy Hazwoper, so the bird usually flushes before the human can get close. Trying to cover the last few yards, the ungainly human is forced to run in rubber boots through sand, gravel and rocks. Oil-covered rip-rap is even more



EBRPD Volunteers at Radio Beach near the Bay Bridge toll booths.

treacherous. Although my team saw numerous oiled birds, in four hours we were only able to catch four birds.

What I learned from this experience:

1. Oil is devious and relentless. Sometimes it seemed that a spot would simply appear on my gloves or my suit and it would spread and spread and spread. Pity the poor bird trying in vain to preen its feathers.

2. Humans are using a lot of toxic chemicals, and accidents like the one that resulted in the oil spill are pretty much inevitable.

3. Most people demonstrated great compassion for the injured wildlife and wanted to help in any way they could. One man gave me a bag of clean T-shirts to put in the bird carriers. Almost everyone expressed gratitude for what the volunteers were doing.

4. The Bay Area is woefully unprepared for an environmental disaster. We wasted a lot of time waiting for the decision-makers to deploy resources. I now have a better understanding of the disastrous response to Hurricane Katrina.

5. We are lucky. As bad as it was, it could have been worse. It was a relatively small spill. Our government agencies need to do a better job of coordination and communication. Hopefully, this will provide a wake-up call to state and local officials, and next time it won't take so long to deploy containment booms and deploy other resources.

6. We *can* do better, and we *must* do better!

Observations

Steve Glover

Submit Contra Costa County sightings to Steve Glover at countylinelines@sbcglobal.net or (925) 997-1112.

A **Cackling Goose** was at Miller Knox Regional Shoreline near Richmond on 10/22 (ES) and 11/3 (LL). A **Brant** continued at Miller Knox Regional Shoreline on 11/3 (LL).

Two male **Eurasian Wigeons**, as well as a possible **Eurasian Wigeon**, were at the Albany Crescent on 10/29 (JS).

The male **Harlequin Duck** continued around Brooks Island, Richmond on 10/11 (KP). It is most reliably seen around the dilapidated pier on the island, a long scope view from the Richmond Marina. An **Oldsquaw** was also near Brooks Island on 10/11 (KP). A female **Hooded Merganser** was at Jewel Lake, Tilden Park on 11/2 (PR).

An adult **Bald Eagle** was at Briones Reservoir on 11/6 (DW).



Brian Murphy

A **Burrowing Owl** was near the Navarone entrance to Lime Ridge Open Space, Walnut Creek on 10/12 (JB).

A **Hairy Woodpecker** at Point Pinole Regional Shoreline on 10/28 provided an extremely rare record of a migrant in the county away from known breeding areas (LL).

An empidonax flycatcher thought to be a **Willow Flycatcher** was at the Tilden Park Nature Area on 10/13, a relatively late date for this species (DW).

A **Red-breasted Nuthatch** was at Miller Knox Regional Shoreline, Richmond on 10/8 (SG). Another or possibly the same individual was present on 10/11 (KP). Yet another was present there on 11/3 (LL).

A **White-throated Sparrow** visited a Pinole backyard 10/25-11/3 (LL). Another was at a Moraga backyard from 11/1 until at least 11/18 (EM). Single White-throateds were at Miller Knox Regional Shoreline and Heather Farm Park, Walnut Creek on 11/3 (LL, FS).

Jane Barnes, Steve Glover, Laura Look, Ellis Myers, Kathy Parker, Emilie Strauss, Denise Wight

Trip Reports

Abbott's Lagoon, October 20. Six birders enjoyed perfect weather at the Point Reyes headquarters and Abbott's Lagoon. No unusual birds were seen, but we enjoyed the Winter Wren, Townsend's Warblers, and Pine Siskins at the headquarters and the Fox Sparrow and Clark's Grebe at the lagoon, among a total of 58 species seen.

Fred Safier

Wintering Raptors and Waterfowl of the Central Valley, November 3. Fifteen birders joined leader Terry Colborn in Solano and Yolo Counties to search for wintering raptors and waterfowl. They weren't disappointed. Greeted by spring-like conditions, with temperatures that reached the upper 70's, the group set off heading south from Dixon. The first stop along Hwy. 113 produced two Ferruginous hawks; one at fairly close range afforded everyone great scope views.

Moving on to Robinson Road, a nice flock of over 100 Mountain Plovers was a special treat and a life bird for several participants. In the morning light we were able to see all the details of their subtle winter plumage. Next we watched as a Merlin chased Mourning Doves from their roost in the row of Osage orange trees, while a Great-horned Owl flushed, giving us a brief view of its massive body and large wingspan. A flock of 60+ Long-billed Curlews dropped into the field in front of us as we watched a Rough-legged Hawk soaring overhead.

Our lunch stop at Jepson Prairie Preserve was briefly interrupted by a Prairie Falcon zipping by and perching on a distant wire.

In route to the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area, we stopped briefly at the Tremont Church Cemetery where we all watched a roosting Barn Owl, and added several passerine species to our field trip list.

Although the two Sharp-tailed Sandpipers seen last week at YBWA were gone, and the reported female Garganey was a "no-show," we were, nonetheless, treated to some great birds at the refuge. Our first stop produced in-the-scope views of a nearby American Bittern, while a second scope was trained on a perched White-tailed Kite.

Overall, shorebirds and waterfowl numbers were down, and the Sora and Virginia Rail were non-responsive at attempts to call them out, however, a Short-eared Owl that flew over us more

Welcome New Members

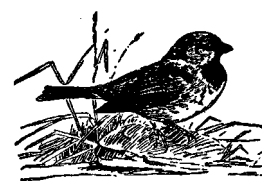
Joe Altman	Pleasant Hill
Mary Ashby	Castro Valley
Jerry Gardner	San Ramon
Astrid Munroe	Moraga
Frances Portello	Martinez
Janifer Puyans	Walnut Creek
Jane Sedley	Lafayette
Sawitree Somburanakul	Walnut Creek

than made up for the shortfall. We tallied 64 species on the day, including 9 raptors species and 8 species of waterfowl.

Terry Colborn

Limantour, November 10. Seven members tested the adage that the worst day birding is better than the best day working. We started in mild drizzle and ended with moderate rain and strong winds. We were three days post-oil spill but saw no oil or oiled birds. Two observers we talked to had seen two oiled Surf Scoters. (The oil came to Limantour the next day.) We saw 45 species of birds with excellent looks at Wilson's Snipe, Common Yellowthroat, California Quail, and many different ducks.

Maury Stern



English Sparrow

Passer domesticus

Birds of Golden Gate Park
Joseph Mailliard
1930



These birds are of a size between a phoebe and a kingbird. On bird lists, as well, they're between the phoebes and the kingbirds.

Unscramble these letters, or turn to Page 9 to learn more.

AAACCDEEFH-
HHLORRSTTTY

Field Trip Schedule

By Hugh Harvey

December

8-9 Saturday-Sunday	Gray Lodge
12 Wednesday	Niles Area
15 Saturday	Christmas Count/Central
19 Wednesday	Christmas Count/East County

January

5 Saturday	Putah Creek
21 Monday	Arrowhead Marsh/Lake Merritt
26 Saturday	Las Gallinas/Rush Creek/Shollenberger
30 Wednesday	Sunol Regional Park

February

2 Saturday	Thornton/Cosumnes Preserve
8 Friday	Grizzly Island
23 Saturday	Tomaes Bay State Park
28 Thursday	Mt. View Sanitary/McNabney Marsh

Field trips are open to members and non-members, beginners and advanced birders. Weather or other contingencies may require changes. For updates, visit the MDAS website at www.diabloaudubon.com/index/php.

Because most trips do not return until late afternoon, bring a lunch and join us during our midday break.

Category ①: Easy, little or no walking, smooth paths

Category ②: Moderate, one mile or more, possibly rough terrain

Category ③: Difficult, extensive walking on rough terrain.

Carpool locations: **Sun Valley**—Southwest corner of the Sun Valley Mall parking lot at Willow Pass Road and Contra Costa Boulevard in Concord. **El Nido Ranch Road**—Take the Acalanes Road/Upper Happy Valley Road exit off SR 24, west of Lafayette. El Nido Ranch Road is parallel to and north of the freeway. Park just east of the intersection with Acalanes Road and on the north side of El Nido Ranch Road. **Sycamore Valley Road Park and Ride Lot**—Just south of Danville, exit I-680 at Sycamore Valley Road to the east; the Park and Ride lot is on the left.

Come birding
with us!

② Saturday-Sunday December 8-9

Wildlife Refuges of the Sacramento Valley

Leader: Terry Colborn. 530-758-0689.
This weekend field trip to several refuges in the northern Sacramento Valley will visit a number of well known winter habitats for thousands of waterfowl and other avian specialties. For centuries the wetlands of the greater Sacramento Valley have hosted millions of wintering ducks, geese and swans. Today less than 5% of these vital wetlands remain, magnifying the significant importance of our State and Federal refuge systems. On Saturday, we'll visit Sacramento NWR, a 10,700 acre complex with over 7,600 acres of seasonally managed ponds and wetlands. Sac NWR is one of the premier waterfowl refuges in California and a critically important resting and feeding area for tens of thousands of wintering waterfowl. From late October to early March there are typically over 600,000 ducks and 200,000 geese on the seasonal ponds and adjoining uplands and open fields; numbers peak

in December and January. Twenty-five percent of the world's Aleutian Canada Goose population winters at Sac NWR. Other unique species include Bald Eagle and Peregrine Falcon. We'll also tour several additional units of the Sacramento NWR complex to the north along the Sacramento River looking for other birds of interest including Sandhill Cranes, Tri-colored Blackbirds, Rough-legged Hawk, Northern Harrier, White-tailed Kite, herons, egrets and shorebirds. At day's end, we'll enjoy a group dinner; overnight in Williams.

On Sunday we'll bird Colusa NWR; although much smaller than Sac NWR with 4,600 acres, the refuge is no less an important haven to wildlife. We'll drive the three-mile auto loop and walk the one-mile nature trail, looking for Barn and Great Horned Owls, Wood Duck and Hooded Merganser. Harris's sparrow has been found along this trail in winter.

Next we'll bird the Sutter Buttes area, remnants of an ancient volcano and the world's smallest mountain range. Target species include Mountain Bluebird, Prairie Falcon, Loggerhead Shrike and Golden Eagle. In the afternoon we'll tour Gray Lodge WMA where we expect to see large flights of Snow Geese, looking for Ross's Geese among them. We'll also look and listen for Sora, Virginia's Rail and American Bittern. A visit to the Harry Adamson and Betty Adamson

Hides is a must; Harry and Betty were founding members of MDAS, and the Sutter Buttes/Gray Lodge area is featured in many of his paintings. We will stay at the refuge until dusk when, as though on cue, thousands of ducks and geese take to wing and fly to nearby fields to feed during the night - truly a spectacle to behold as the sun sets over the Coast Range. Those who wish are welcomed to join the group for dinner in nearby Live Oak.

Space is limited and carpooling is essential. There are several hotels in Williams; early room reservations are recommended. This is a great trip for beginners and seasoned birders alike. Participants may want to arrive on Friday night. For further details and/or to sign-up, call the field leader: Terry Colborn 530.758.0689.

② Wednesday, December 12 Niles Area

Leader: Jimm Edgar, 510-658-2330.
Carpool leaves Sycamore Valley Road Park and Ride at 8:15 AM. Meet at the Vallejo Mill Park in Fremont at 9:00 AM. Take I-680 south to Niles Canyon exit, turn right (west), follow SR 84 about 7 miles towards the Niles District. The park is at SR 84 and Mission Blvd. We follow Alameda Creek and visit some of the old gravel pits which have been re-landscaped as parkland.

Christmas Bird Counts

Until the end of the nineteenth century ornithologists, lacking even a first-edition Peterson's Guide, made species identifications by comparing skins of birds they shot with stuffed birds in their private collection or those in a museum tray. A popular way to add to their reference skins was to participate in a Christmas Day hunt, a competition to shoot as many birds as possible. But in 1900, Frank Chapman, a naturalist at the American Museum of

Saturday, December 15
Central County Christmas Count



Wednesday, December 19
East County Christmas Count

Compilers:

Jimm Edgar, 510-658-2330

Maury Stern, 925-284-5980

Natural History and editor of Bird Lore, forerunner to Audubon magazine, organized the first "Christmas Bird Census."

Now, more than 50,000 observers participate each year in this all-day count of early-winter bird populations. The results of their efforts are compiled into the longest-running database in ornithology, representing over a century of unbroken data on trends of early-winter bird populations across the Americas. This database can be accessed through the Bird-Source website at www.birdsource.com. Simply put, the Christmas Bird Count, or "CBC", is citizen science in action.

Anyone is welcome to participate, since field parties are set up so that inexperienced observers are always out with seasoned CBC veterans. A charge of \$5 helps to cover the costs of processing and publishing the data. Those who count birds at their home feeders do not pay. As long as you live within one of the CBC circles, you are welcome to count the birds at your feeder on the designated day.

You are invited to take part in this event as MDAS will conduct two separate counts, on Saturday, December 15, and Wednesday, December 19. Rain will not stay our dedicated birders from their appointed rounds. Every pair of eyes »

January Field Trips

① Saturday, January 5
Putah Creek

Leader: Fred Safier, 937-2906.

Carpool leaves Sun Valley at 8:00 AM. Meet at 8:45 AM at the intersection of Cherry Glen and Pleasants Valley Roads, approximately 1 mile north from I-80. Park on Cherry Glen. Dress warmly; this is a cold, windy area.

Possible Osprey, Phainopepla, Canyon and Rock Wrens, Barrow's Goldeneye and Hooded Merganser.

① Monday, January 21

Lake Merritt/Arrowhead Marsh

Leader: Ethan Chickering, 686-9231.

Carpool leaves at 8 am from El Nido Ranch Road. Meet at 8:30 AM in parking lot by Lake Merritt. Take SR 24 to Oakland and I-980, take Grand Avenue exit and turn left on Grand. Enter park by Children's Fairland and follow road around to parking lot entrance on right between boathouse and aviary.

After some birding here, we will catch the high tide at Arrowhead marsh around 10 AM. Hopefully the rising tide will flush out rails. Area is good for shorebirds and often loons on the estuary.

» is helpful in this endeavor—you do not need to be an expert bird watcher. Just bring your binoculars and a sense of camaraderie and fun. You may opt for either or both days. Feeder-watchers are encouraged, as well, especially if you anticipate having an unusual species in your yard.

As darkness concludes the counts, there's still fun to come as we congregate for a count-down dinner. Details will be given to all participants.

To sign up, just call Jimm Edgar at (510) 658-2330.

② Saturday, January 26
**Las Gallinas/Rush Creek/
Shollenberger Park**

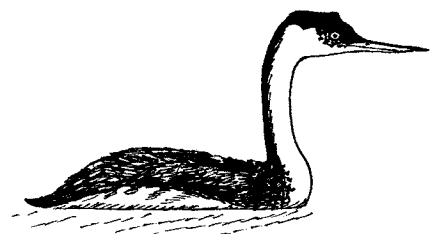
Leader: Jean Richmond, 837-2843.

Carpool leaves Sun Valley parking lot at 7:30 AM. Meet at Las Gallinas at 8:30 AM. Take I-680 across the Benicia Bridge (toll). Go west on I-780 to I-80 towards Sacramento, exit to SR 37. Follow SR 37 22 miles to US 101 south, exit at Lucas Valley Road/Smith Ranch Road. Cross under the freeway to the east on Smith Ranch Road for 0.6 miles, cross the railroad tracks and turn left. Follow the road around the hill 0.7 miles until arriving at the Las Gallinas Valley Sanitary District parking lot. Rush Creek Marsh is just north and east of the Atherton Avenue exit from US 101 in Novato. Immediately past the Park and Ride lot on Atherton, turn left on Binford Road and go north to the marsh. Shollenberger Park is in Petaluma, east of US 101. Exit at Lakeville Road, go east to Cader Lane and turn right to the park entrance. All three sites are good for wintering waders, shorebirds, waterfowl and raptors.

③ Wednesday, January 30
Sunol Regional Park

Leader: Eugenia Larson, 806-0644.

Carpool leaves at 8:15 AM from Sycamore Valley Road Park and Ride lot in Danville. Meet at 8:45 AM in the first parking lot on the left, Sunol Park. Go south on I-680 to Calaveras Road. Go left under I-680 and drive 4 miles south on Calaveras; turn left on Geary Road and go 2 miles to park. Entry fee required. Watch and listen for Wild Turkey along Geary Road. Golden Eagles and other raptors, Rufous-crowned Sparrows, Dipper, and Canyon and Rock Wrens are possible.



California at Berkeley, has been studying the unique behavior of the Acorn Woodpecker since 1974. He continues to marvel at the complex social behavior of the Acorn Woodpecker, which is unique among the North America's 22 species of woodpecker. Dr. Koenig will share the discoveries of his thirty years of research as well as the questions that still remain for further research. Acorn Woodpecker groups engage in many communal activities, including territorial defense, communal care of the young, and shared acorn storage in communal granaries. They are cooperative breeders and may live in groups composed of up to six co-breeding males, 3 joint-nesting females, and non-breeding helpers of both sexes. Dr. Koenig will discuss the many unique features of this system, including "incest avoidance" and turf wars between

rival gangs. In 1978, he observed what he called "egg demolition derbies." Co-nesting females were removing eggs from the joint nest and storing them in a nearby tree. The eggs would later become a snack for any member of the family. Join us on January 3 and learn how Dr. Koenig discovered the value and significance of this behavior.

Dr. Koenig's research continues in several areas. In California, valley and blue oaks are not regenerating. There are no young oaks to take the place of mature trees as they die. He will discuss this alarming trend and other aspects of his long-term study of the Acorn Woodpecker.

January Birding Information will be our annual update of the Contra Costa County and the East Contra Costa County Christmas Bird Counts with Jimm Edgar and Maury Stern.

MDAS Annual Treasurer's Report – 2007

Mount Diablo Audubon Society remains in an excellent position to serve our community. We had another successful year. The annual year-end fundraising drive continues to be strong and our total chapter memberships set another record high.

The financial health of MDAS, due to the generosity of our members, allows us to actively pursue our mission. During the year, we funded important habitat preservation projects and continued our community outreach efforts for young people. Your generosity supports our monthly presentation program, this newsletter, the annual Christmas Count, the EBB Bird Sightings list, and much more. You have read about these important community efforts in this and prior issues of the Quail. Each dollar you give is put to good use for the benefit of our community.

The General Fund balance covers operations and reserves, the Conservation and Education balance is used towards these efforts, the Breeding Bird Atlas will be depleted as we progress towards publication, and the McNabney Marsh funds support the marsh and other conservation activities.

By Steve Buffi, Treasurer

MDAS Managed Funds	July 2006 – June 2007			
	Revenues	Expenses	Net	Fund Balance 7/1/07
General Fund	\$27,294.67	\$21,234.34	\$6,060.33	\$74,766.33
Conservation & Education	404.66	1,342.75	(938.09)	12,125.69
Breeding Bird Atlas	587.03	0	587.03	19,538.06
McNabney Marsh	235.16	0	235.16	7,827.06
Total All Funds	\$28,521.52	\$22,577.09	\$5,944.43	\$114,257.14

Birding Utah *Continued from Page 8*

27 species of water birds at one stop while being surrounded by the sounds of Red-Winged Blackbirds, Yellow-headed Blackbirds, and Western Meadowlarks. Ten species of sparrows were also to be had as we slowly made our way along. We were calling out birds faster than anyone could record them.

By that time we were running out of light, so we made the long drive back to

Salt Lake City filling in our checklists. We counted 129 species of birds, and added Yellow-bellied Marmot, Moose, Pronghorn Antelope, Prairie Dog, Jackrabbit, Uinta Ground Squirrel, Seven-Striped Chipmunk, and Mule Deer to the mammal list. I want to thank Bill Fenimore again for a wonderful trip and a delicious lunch. We accused him of arranging the flat tire to lure in the birds of prey, and with a sly smile, he didn't deny it.

Use Your IRA to Make a Tax-free Gift

Here's some important news that can help you plan a tax-effective strategy for your IRA distributions in 2007 while you support your favorite charities, but time is of the essence! For the tax year of 2007, taxpayers over the age of 70½ years may donate up to \$100,000 per year from an IRA to a charity or non-profit organization without having the distribution count as taxable income on their federal income tax return.

The Pension Protection Act of 2006 provided a one-step option to make a charitable contribution directly from your IRA to a non-profit organization in 2006 or 2007 with no tax consequences.

And there's more good news: Your IRA charitable distribution will satisfy all or part of your required minimum IRA distribution for 2007. Some restrictions do apply:

- You must be 70½ years of age.
- Tax benefits apply for gifts up to \$100,000 per person in 2007.
- You can make these IRA charitable distributions in 2007 only.
- You must instruct your IRA account administrator to make the distribution directly to the charity or non-profit.
- Only outright charitable gifts can be made (not life-income gifts such as charitable gift annuities).
- Your gift must be made to a public charity.

How to make the tax-free gift:

» The Pension Protection Act provides that eligible IRA owners may obtain the tax advantages of making charitable distributions if the payments are made directly from the IRA account itself. You must instruct your IRA administrator to make a direct distribution to the charity or organization of your choice. Contact your IRA administrator to find out if they have a form you must use.

» Instruct your IRA administrator to send the distribution check to the address of the charity or organization you have chosen to give to.

» You may need to supply the tax identification number (TIN) of your charity.

» Instruct the administrator to identify you as the IRA account owner/donor by name and address on its cover letter.

» Separately inform the charity or organization that you are making an IRA charitable distribution. The charity is required to send you a receipt for your donation.

Ornithological Opportunities



Through the end of November, the art of **Harry Adamson** is featured at the Blue Wing Gallery in Woodland. Five original oil paintings include a magnificent Gyrfalcon [*My favorite. Ed.*] and one of Harry's own favorites—a group of Black-bellied Whistling Ducks. Many full-size gleece prints are on display and offered for sale. Harry Adamson, still painting at the age of 91, is one of the Founders of Mount Diablo Audubon Society, as well as being the premier internationally renowned master of wildfowl and wildlife art. More information at www.bluewing-gallery.com.

Morro Bay Winter Bird Festival, January 18-21, Morro Bay. Join Morro Coast Audubon Society for the 12th Annual Morro Bay Winter Bird Festival. On California's scenic Central Coast, Morro Bay is an important stop on the Pacific Flyway and one of the country's pre-eminent birding spots. The area is recognized worldwide for its diversity of both resident and wintering birds, and at last year's festival, over 200 species of birds were identified!

For more information about the Festival, check out the website at www.morrobaybirdfestival.org, or call (805) 772-4677. You can request that your name be added to the mailing list for the 2008 brochure, or register online. The registration deadline is January 4, 2008 and early sign-ups are encouraged as the most popular events fill up quickly.

McNabney Marsh Birding Field Trip, Saturday, February 16; 9:00 to 11:00 am. Join Mt. View Sanitary District's Wetlands Biologist Dick Bogaert for a fun and informative hike around McNabney and Moorhen Marsh systems as we look for our favorite avian residents and migrants. We'll learn a little local history along »



Bob Wisecarver Honored

Diablo Valley Fly Fishermen recently announced a new scholarship award to be given annually to a student at UC Davis College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences. The scholarship is named in Bob Wisecarver's honor to recognize his long-standing leadership and contributions to DVFF and his dedication to fly fishing and the environment.

When Diablo Valley Fly Fishermen was formed in 1968, Bob became the club's first president. Very much still a contributor today, Bob remains one of their premier casting instructors. In addition to fly fishing, he is also an expert in bat, California Quail and Barn Owl habitats and spends countless hours on habitat remediation for all three.

Read more about Bob's fascination with fishing from the age of 3 at www.diablovalleyflyfish.org/Windknots/2007_Windknots_October.pdf.

Diablo Valley Fly Fishermen President Phil Erickson [Photo: left, with Bob Wisecarver] sums up "About BOB . . . he is one very special individual!"

» the way, and we might even find something unusual such as Blue-winged Teal or Ring-necked Duck in the wetlands! Meet at the staging area on the plant road just before the freeway tunnel. Dress in layers. Bring binoculars if you have them. We have a few pairs to loan. Bring a warm drink if you want. Beginners are always welcome. Heavy rain cancels. For more information please contact: Dick Bogaert, Wetlands Biologist, 925-228-5635 x16 or DBogaert@mvsd.org.

San Diego Bird Festival, February 6-11. San Diego is renowned for variety of birds and habitat and 224 species were seen by 2007 festival participants. Don't delay, many field trips are already filled. Contact: www.sandiegoaudubon.org/birdfest.htm.

This Was a Job for "Batman"

A New Home for Flying Friends

Reprinted from the EBMUD newsletter Customer Pipeline.

It seems bats can't get a break. Movie-makers portray them as frightful creatures, and many people think only in stereotypes about bats: assuming they're dirty, likely to have rabies, get tangled in people's hair, and even might drink our blood. Actually, bats give real gifts to humankind, especially by prolific bug-eating. They love mosquitoes! A brown bat can catch 1,200 of them in an hour. Bats also pollinate many plants, and produce



Bats are valuable allies in getting rid of insect pests naturally, without pesticides.

guano, a prized fertilizer. Some bats eat their own weight in insects in a night—including destructive pests like the corn ear worm.

Knowing the value of bats, EBMUD was reluctant to disturb a colony of Mexican free-tailed bats, but it was necessary for structural reasons to fill some openings in the Jackson Creek Spillway, on the north arm of Pardee Reservoir—our key water supply storage on the Mokelumne River 30 miles east of Lodi. The spillway had been a perfect bat "hang-out." To replace the original ideal space, we enlisted the aid of Bob Wisecarver, a Walnut Creek resident who has become an expert on housing bats. Using plywood and fabric, he crafted bat houses on the ceiling and walls of the spillway. They love their new bat condos, and the population is now estimated at 6,900 bats. EBMUD Ranger Naturalists and volunteers use the collected bat guano to fertilize plants at historic Wildermuth House (a stone landmark built in 1861, near what is now the south arm of Pardee Reservoir). And if you don't get bitten by mosquitoes while fishing at Pardee, you can thank the bats.

Thank You to Our Donors

The Board of Directors of Mount Diablo Audubon Society wishes to thank all those who have contributed during the current fiscal year. As mentioned in the Annual Treasurer's Report, these donations permit the on-going programs dedicated to preservation of habitat for birds and other wildlife, and promote an awareness of our natural wonders among young people.

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Saturday, December 3

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Many New Vendors Will Be Here

In the Backyard:

Winter is our favorite time of the year for backyard birdfeeding. White and Golden-crowned Sparrows, Dark-eyed Juncos, Red-breasted Nuthatches are all visiting the feeders. Good numbers of early arriving American Goldfinches are being reported.

Each fall and winter we are always on the outlook for Pine Siskins. Nine to ten years ago thousands of this irruptive species stayed all winter. They were back in great numbers in the winter of 2005-2006. Many flocks of 50 or more were reported. Last year very few were seen. It will be interesting to see if they return this winter. They often travel with goldfinches. Both species love thistle (nyjer) seed and readily come to bird feeders.

Birding Optics Seminars Saturday, December 15

· Mike Williams, of WBU and a member of MDAS, will lead a FREE workshop on "How to Buy Birding Optics" on Saturday, December 15 at 10:00 AM at Wild Birds Unlimited. Have you seen the fantastic Stokes DLS binocs, or the Vortex Vipers that close focus at under 6 feet? There will also be many other brands of binoculars and spotting scopes on display. As seating is limited, please RSVP.

Mike and Cecil Williams
Wild Birds Unlimited
692 Contra Costa Blvd.
Pleasant Hill, CA 94523
925-798-0303

Visit us at www.wbupleasanthill.com

MDAS MEMBERSHIP/RENEWAL APPLICATION

Please enroll my family and me as a member of Mount Diablo Audubon Society for \$25 for one year.

For an additional \$20 (new NAS members only) or \$35 (returning members), please enroll me in the National Audubon Society to receive four quarterly issues of the Audubon Magazine.

I'm enclosing an additional tax-deductible donation of \$_____.

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Ashthroated Flycatcher *Myiarchus cinerascens*



The Ash-throated Flycatcher is the only flycatcher that nests in Contra Costa County in cavities. They most commonly use old woodpecker holes in trees, but they also use nest boxes; sometimes they may commandeer those of Western Bluebirds. Ash-throated Flycatchers range from eastern Oregon and from all of California east to Utah, New Mexico and western Texas. Most will migrate to winter in Baja and other Mexican locales.

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The Garden Center

Mount Diablo Audubon Society meets on the first Thursday of each month, except July and August, in the Camellia Room of The Gardens at Heather Farms, 1540 Marchbanks Drive, Walnut Creek. Everyone is invited.



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Wilson's Phalarope along flooded fields at Deseret Ranch, Utah
Photo courtesy © Tim Avery, <http://www.timaverybirding.com>

Birding Beyond the Border

Birding in Utah *Patricia Bachetti*

Flat on our backs, lying in four inches of fine dust at 8000 ft., three of us exclaimed at once "Isn't that a Ferruginous Hawk?!" Grabbing our near-by binoculars, we all looked up at what was indeed a Ferruginous Hawk soaring high over the ridge, followed in seconds by a Bald Eagle headed in the opposite direction. No, we were not at an outdoor orgy, but I do consider 129 species in a day a real pleasure. We were actually fixing a flat tire in the high country of Deseret Ranch, a private 150,000 acre working cattle ranch managed for birds and wildlife in NE Utah. Led by Bill Fenimore, the owner of the Wild Bird Center in Layton, Utah, four of us spent the day birding the varied environments of this unique ranch. Had it not been for the flat tire, we likely would have seen closer to 140 species that day in July.

Family matters led me to Utah several times this last summer, so the opportunity to bird was too good to pass up. The birds of Antelope Island were described in the last issue of the Quail, and with the kind and enthusiastic help of Bill, a day-long guided trip to Deseret Ranch was arranged in early July. The ranch is private property, so in order to access it you must be with a guide who has permission to enter. It's a two-hour drive from the Salt Lake City area along State Route 39 over the Monte Cristo Range of the Wasatch Mountains.

Our first target bird of the day was on a dirt road off of Route 39, the "Blue Grouse." A displaying Dusky Grouse male was strutting around a bend in the road, and soon after a hen with four chicks appeared. Bill stopped in several campgrounds along the way, leading to sightings of Williamson's Sapsucker, Red-Naped Sapsucker, Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers, and Northern Flickers. We were also entertained by four species of hummingbirds: Black-Chinned, the tiny Calliope, Broad-tailed, and Rufous. Because the male Black-Chinned produces a low unique hum with its wings, it is

often heard before it's seen. Most of the campgrounds had streams and willows, so we picked up four species of warblers in our quick survey, as well as Red Crossbill, Cassin's Finch, and Pine Siskin in the trees. A very large young bull Moose suddenly appeared along the road—another life sighting for me.

After Bill's home-cooked lunch at one of the old high-country ranch houses, we experienced our flat tire, as well as Golden and Bald Eagles, the already-mentioned Ferruginous Hawk, and a nesting Spotted Sandpiper in the nearby creek. American Dippers are also abundant. Hammond's, Dusky, and Cordilleran Flycatchers were common, and we found Western Wood-Pewee, Olive-Sided Flycatcher, and Say's Phoebe on the way to the lower part of the ranch.

That part of the ranch is much like the Sierra Valley in eastern California. Wetlands exist along with grazed grasslands, and it was filled with breeding dabbling ducks, Sandhill Cranes, White-faced Ibis, and grassland wading birds. We counted

Continued on Page 6 »

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